

**U.S. Department of Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Roseburg BLM District, Oregon**

**Elementary Watson
Commercial Thinning & Density Management
Decision Document**

SECTION 1 – THE DECISION

Decision

It is my decision to authorize the Proposed Action Alternative as described in the Elementary Watson Commercial Thinning & Density Management Environmental Assessment (EA) in Chapters 1 and 2 (EA #OR-104-08-03; pgs. 1, 3-7). The Project Design Features that will be implemented as part of the Action Alternative are described on pages 4-11 of the Elementary Watson EA. These project design features have been developed into contract stipulations and will be implemented as part of the timber sale contract.

Elementary Watson Commercial Thinning & Density Management will occur on four units (approximately 286 acres) of mid-seral, second-growth forest approximately 40-64 years old located in the in the Little River, Lower North Umpqua, and Lower South Umpqua fifth-field watersheds in section 13, T.27 S., R. 4 W. and section 7 T.27 S., R. 3 W., Willamette Meridian (see Figures 1 & 2). In addition, approximately 2 acres will be removed for the development of spur roads and rights-of-way.

This project is within the Adaptive Management Area, General Forest Management Area, and Riparian Reserve Land Use Allocations and will provide approximately 3.584 million board feet (3.584 MMBF) of timber available for auction. Approximately 1.039 million board feet (1.039 MMBF) of timber will come from the Riparian Reserve land use allocation. This project is in conformance with management direction from the ROD/RMP.

This decision is subject to administrative remedy under 43 CFR § 5003.2 and 5003.3.

Updated Information

The updated information, described below, has been considered but does not alter the conclusions of the analysis.

1) Unit Configuration:

The unit configuration for Elementary Watson will be as described in the EA except there will be 276 acres of cable yarding (formerly 275 acres as proposed in the EA [pgs. 3, 6]), and 2 acres of spur/rights-of-way clearing (formerly 3 acres as proposed in the EA [pgs. 3, 6]) due to final mapping and unit layout. There will be 10 acres of ground-based yarding as described in the EA (pgs. 3, 6).

2) Spurs & Roads:

There will be approximately 0.19 miles of new, permanent roads (Spur 7b) constructed (formerly 0.59 miles were proposed in the EA, pgs. 6-7). Approximately 0.34 miles of temporary spurs and landings will be constructed (formerly these spurs and landings were proposed as permanent in the EA, but they will now be temporary).

Approximately 1.09 miles of road will be renovated (formerly 7.26 miles of roads and spurs were

proposed for renovation in the EA, pgs. 6-7). There is approximately 6.17 miles less renovation of existing roads than in the EA (pgs. 6-7) because it would be uneconomical for the sale to provide the amount of rock needed to accomplish the additional 6.17 miles of renovation.

Approximately 0.52 miles of roads constructed or renovated (Spurs 1, 2, 3, and the 27-4-13.2 road) will be decommissioned by water-barring, mulching with logging slash where available (or with straw if logging slash is not available), and blocking with trench barriers. In addition, approximately 0.45 miles of skid trails used by off-highway vehicles in Unit 13A will be decommissioned by subsoiling and waterbarring those portions that can safely be reached by equipment, mulched with logging slash where available (or with straw if logging slash is not available), and blocked with trench barriers after harvest operations are completed.

Compliance and Monitoring

Compliance with this decision will be ensured by frequent on the ground inspections by the Authorized Officer. Monitoring will be conducted as per the direction given in Appendix I of the RMP (pgs. 189-209).

SECTION 2 – THE DECISION RATIONALE

The Project Design Features described in the EA (pgs. 4-11) will minimize soil compaction, limit erosion, protect slope stability, protect wildlife habitat, protect fish habitat, protect air and water quality, as well as protect other identified resource values. I have reviewed the resource information contained in the EA and the updated information presented in this decision. This decision recognizes that impacts could occur to some of these resources; however, the impacts to resource values will not exceed those identified in the *Final - Roseburg District Proposed Resource Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* (PRMP/EIS). This decision provides timber commodities resulting from silvicultural treatments whose effects to the environment are within those anticipated and already analyzed in the PRMP/EIS.

Chapter 2 of the EA describes two alternatives: a "No Action" alternative and a "Proposed Action" alternative. The No Action alternative was not selected because it did not meet the objectives from pages 1-2 of the EA to:

- comply with Section I of the O&C Act,
- contribute timber volume towards a sustainable supply of timber,
- manage General Forest Management Area to assure a high level of sustained timber productivity and perform commercial thinning on stands less than 80 years of age,
- perform density management within the Riparian Reserve to help forest stands develop late-successional characteristics and attain forest conditions that contribute to the Aquatic Conservation Strategy.

SECTION 3 – PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The BLM solicited comments from affected tribal governments, adjacent landowners, landowners along the haul route, holders of registered water rights within one mile downstream of the project area, affected State and local government agencies, and the general public on the Elementary Watson Commercial Thinning & Density Management EA during a 30-day public comment period (August 5 – September 4, 2008). Three comments were received.

Upon reviewing the comments, the following topics warrant additional clarification specific to the Elementary Watson project: (1) road decommissioning and (2) retention trees & slash burning.

1) Road Decommissioning

A comment questioned the need for decommissioning the skid trail in Unit 13A. This skid trail has unauthorized off-highway vehicle use and will be decommissioned (as described above, pgs. 1-2) in order to hinder further soil erosion and to aid in restoring soil productivity.

2) Retention Trees & Slash Burning

A comment expressed concern that slash placed near the boles of reserved trees adjacent to yarding trails to protect the large roots at or near the surface would also harm the trees during fuels reduction burns. As stated in the EA (pg. 6), prescribed burning will occur at landings consisting of machine-piled slash piles. Therefore, slash used to protect the large roots of trees at or near the surface adjacent to yarding trails will not be burned.

The remaining comments did not raise substantive issues that would influence my selection of the Action Alternative of the Elementary Watson Commercial Thinning & Density Management EA.

SECTION 4 – PROTEST PROCEDURES

The decision described in this document is a forest management decision and is subject to protest by the public. In accordance with Forest Management Regulations at 43 CFR § 5003 Administrative Remedies, protests of this decision may be filed with the authorized officer [Marci L. Todd] within 15 days of the first publication date of the notice of decision/timber sale advertisement in *The News-Review*, Roseburg, Oregon.

43 CFR § 5003.3 subsection (b) states that: “Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer and shall contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision.” This precludes the acceptance of electronic mail (e-mail) or facsimile (fax) protests. Only written and signed hard copies of protests that are delivered to the Roseburg District Office will be accepted. The protest must clearly and concisely state the reasons why the decision is believed to be in error.

43 CFR § 5003.3 subsection (c) states: “Protests received more than 15 days after the publication of the notice of decision or the notice of sale are not timely filed and shall not be considered.” Upon timely filing of a protest, the authorized officer shall reconsider the project decision to be implemented in light of the statement of reasons for the protest and other pertinent information available to her. The authorized officer shall, at the conclusion of the review, serve the protest decision in writing to the protesting party(ies). Upon denial of a protest, the authorized officer may proceed with the implementation of the decision as permitted by regulations at 5003.3(f).

If no protest is received by the close of business (4:30 P.M. PST) within 15 days after publication of the decision notice, this decision will become final. If a timely protest is received, the project decision will be reconsidered in light of the statement of reasons for the protest and other pertinent information available, and the Swiftwater Field Office will issue a protest decision.

For further information, contact Marci L. Todd, Field Manager, Swiftwater Field Office, Roseburg District, Bureau of Land Management, 777 NW Garden Valley Blvd; Roseburg, OR. 97471, (541) 440-4931.

Marci L. Todd, Field Manager
Swiftwater Field Office

Date

Figure 1. Elementary Watson Commercial Thinning & Density Management: Units 7A and 7B.

Township 27S, Range 03W, Section 7; Willamette Meridian.

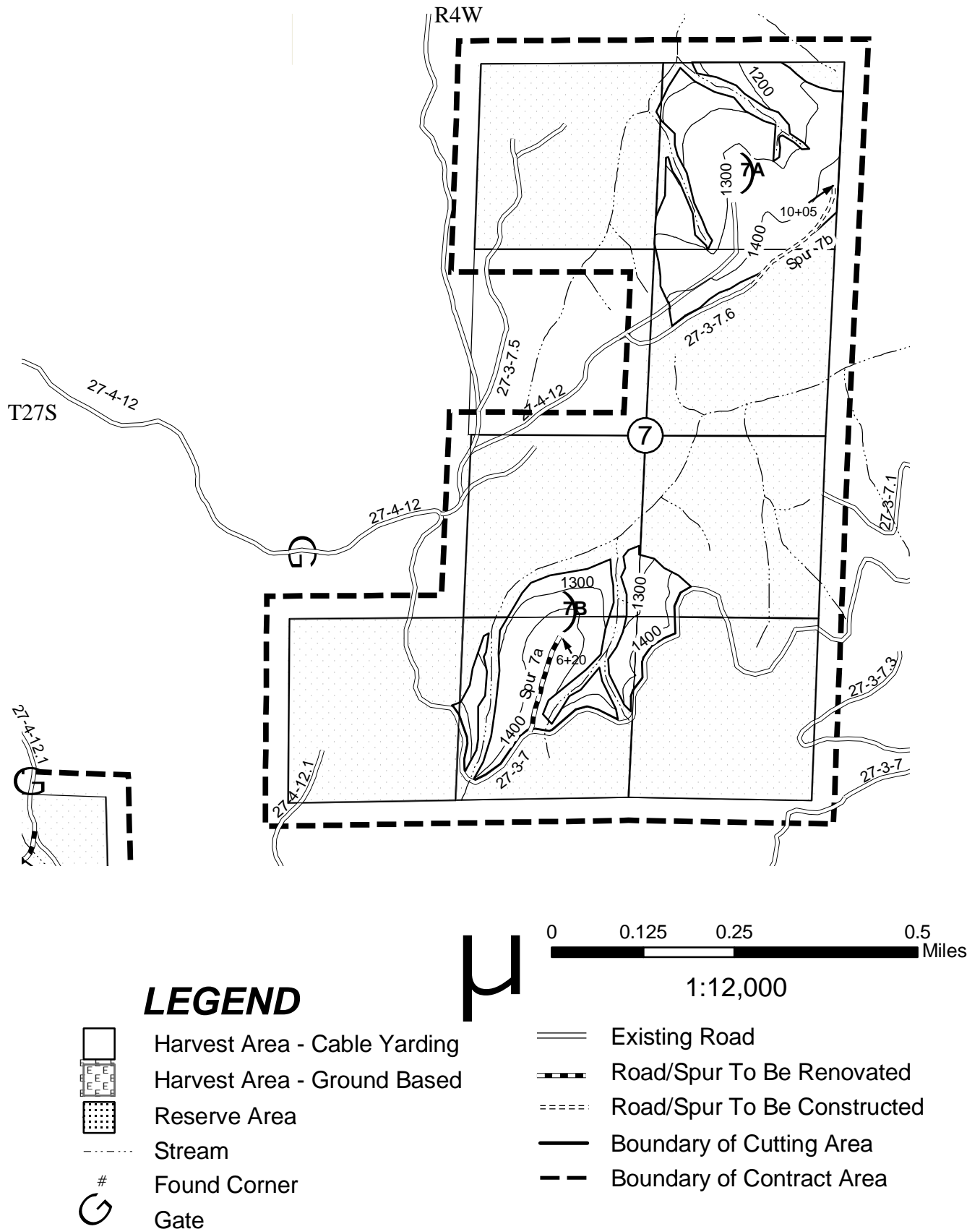


Figure 2. Elementary Watson Commercial Thinning & Density Management: Units 13A and 13B.

Township 27S, Range 04W, Section 13; Willamette Meridian.

